

**TESTIMONY OF CARMEN PENA FOR THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
AGAINST
S.B. 1223 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A PARENT OR GUARDIAN OF A CHILD
CONVICTED AS DELINQUENT.**

**FOR
H.B 6634 AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD WELFARE AND DETENTION IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM
AND ERASURE OF JUVENILE RECORDS.**

APRIL 1, 2011

Good afternoon Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Carmen Pana; I'm here to testify against Senate Bill number 1223 AN ACT CONCERNING THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A PARENT OR GUARDIAN OF A CHILD CONVICTED OF DELINQUENT. This bill would require parents to pay for the cost of treatment and care of their child who become involved in the juvenile justice system as a delinquent.

I'm a parent of two children who have been involved in the Juvenile justice system not because they are delinquent, but because they have mental illness and were not being provided with the services they need. My 14 year old daughter was referred the first day of school in August 2010 to the juvenile justice system. Not because she was doing anything wrong but because of symptoms of her mental illness that the school was well aware of for years and knew that she was not in the right placement nor was she getting the services she needed.

My son who is 13 in the 7th grade became involved in the justice system one month later also because of his mental illness which he was diagnosed and all issues documented since he was in the first grade.

For all the years that my children have been in with medical experts, the school and other service providers; No one ever educated me on my rights or explained my children disability, mental illness or the sign and symptoms that affect them because of their illness. I did not know what services to access or where to find the right programs for my children. As a Spanish speaking parent it was even harder to access services and information for my children.

Thank God that in August when my daughter was referred to the juvenile justice system her case was referred to the Hartford Juvenile Review Board and I was referred to AFCAMP for assistance. Since my involvement with AFCAMP they have help me to understand my children's disabilities, what the school should be providing my children in special education and the juvenile justice system by providing me training and support to access the services I need. They accompanied me to the PPT meetings and the courts to advocate for my children's services.

I would not know about this bill if I wasn't involved with AFCAMP. There are so many Latino and Black mothers like myself out there trying to do the best they can for their children and not getting the services or information. To pass a bill like this will only add additional burden to them when what they want and need is help.

I want to support Raised Bill No. 6634 AN ACT CONCERNING CHILD WELFARE AND DETENTION IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND ERASURE OF JUVENILE RECORDS. This bill will help Connecticut to reduce discrimination based on race and ethnicity in the juvenile justice system.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.